



**SURVIVORS
OF VIOLENCE
BECOME
LEADERS
OF CHANGE:**

**LESSONS FROM
WOMEN IN THE PACIFIC**



OXFAM
Australia

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This page: Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea: Margaret is a survivor of violence and has received support from Oxfam partner Lifeline. "It has helped me a lot ... in every situation I am going through," she says. Photo: Rodney Dekker/Oxfam.

Front cover: Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea: Lisa* wanted to leave her abusive husband, and sought refuge at Lifeline with her baby daughter. Photo: Rodney Dekker/Oxfam.

Back cover: Morobe province, Papua New Guinea: A woman looks down the valley from Kassam pass. The beautiful landscape belies the brutal reality for many women. Photo: Rodney Dekker/Oxfam.

*Names have been changed to protect identity.

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Thank you to Oxfam staff in Australia and across the Pacific for their valuable contributions. A special mention for our local partners working in gender based violence in the Pacific.

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Port Morseby, PNG: Ruth* is 18-years-old and lived at Lifeline, a women's refuge, after escaping her abusive uncle. Photo: Rodney Dekker/Oxfam.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Violence against women affects an alarming one in three women across the world, including women in Australia. In fact, women and girls aged 15 to 44 are more at risk of rape and domestic violence than of cancer, motor accidents, war, and malaria.

For many women, violence is part of everyday life, gravely affecting their health and reproductive rights, as well as diminishing their ability to gain an education, freely earn a livelihood, participate in public life, and live a life free of fear. What's more, when children witness violence, its debilitating effects create a multi-generational crisis.

The violence that so many women and girls endure prevents the full realisation of the economic, social, and political potential not only of women and girls, but also of communities and countries, as survivors, families, societies, and economies suffer from its devastating and long-term effects.

The incidence of violence against women in Pacific countries is one of the highest in the world: in some Pacific countries, two in three women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a partner; and non-partner sexual violence and other kinds of family violence are also rife. Undoubtedly, urgent action is required.

Almost as disturbing as the violence itself are the ways in which violence is normalised because of gender inequalities that are structural and systemic in many Pacific societies. These include policies that discriminate against women and girls, inequitable division of labour which means women do most of the unpaid or underpaid work, barriers to education, and impunity for those who commit violence against women and girls. These social norms render women and girls subordinate to men and boys, and perpetuate dominant ideals of manhood predicated on violence and the control of women and girls (and their bodies), victim-blaming, and limiting women's independence and decision-making.

Violence against women and girls is the result of gender inequality, but it also exacerbates gender inequality. This not only makes it a particularly difficult issue to address, but confirms that, to eliminate it, we must tackle gender inequality at its roots.

Oxfam has been working with local partners in the Pacific for over seven years, achieving significant changes that have reduced the prevalence of violence against women and girls. In particular, we've supported programs led by local communities and women — many themselves survivors of violence — who are driving ground-breaking change.

By working with and listening to locals and measuring the success of programs, we have learnt that programs are most effective when they address the root causes of violence, such as gender inequality and social norms, and provide survivors of violence with access to justice and support services. We also know that it's critical that programs consider existing cultural structures, and work with men and boys as well as women and girls.

The Australian Government has reiterated its commitment to addressing and ending violence against women and children in Australia and neighbouring countries. Oxfam acknowledges the great work in the region that has been done with Australian aid support. But there continues to be a gap between its rhetoric and its action.

If the Australian Government intends to uphold this commitment, it must take stronger and more consistent action — and soon. Now is the time to build upon the challenge to violence against women and girls in the Pacific that is underway. A good start would be to listen and learn from the voices of Pacific women and communities who are achieving change, and to provide an appropriate aid budget that prioritises women's rights and the elimination of violence against women and girls. To do otherwise is to allow the status quo to continue: as Major David Morrison said, "The standard you walk past is the standard you accept."

As a global citizen and provider of aid within the Asia-Pacific region, Australia must decide whether we will "walk past" a standard we claim not to accept, or take a stand. Now is the time for the Australian Government to build on important foundations of change that have achieved significant outcomes, and work to create a region where women and girls enjoy their human rights and live free of violence.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS A GLOBAL EPIDEMIC

Violence against women and girls is — even in 2016 — still a reality in every nation of the world. Particularly disturbing is that women are most at risk of violence from their intimate partners, and the majority of violence takes place in women's homes. However, women and girls of all ages, and in all places, also experience, or fear, sexual violence in public spaces, from sexual harassment to sexual assault, including rape and femicide.¹ Violence against women and girls prevents the full realisation of the economic, social and political potential not only of women and girls, but also of communities and countries, as survivors, families, societies, and economies suffer from its devastating and long-term effects. And when children witness violence, it creates a multi-generational crisis.

STATISTICS THAT HIGHLIGHT THE NEED FOR ACTION

- 35% of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.²
- Most of this violence is committed by current or previous intimate partners. Almost one-third of women who have been in a relationship report that they have experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by their intimate partner.³
- As many as 38% of all murders of women are committed by intimate partners.⁴
- Up to 50% of sexual assaults are committed against girls under 16.⁵
- In some Pacific countries, two in every three women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from their partner.⁶
- In a recent Asia-Pacific study on men's use of violence against women, nearly 25% of men interviewed reported having perpetrated rape against a woman or girl.⁷
- Women and girls aged 15 to 44 globally are more at risk of rape and domestic violence than of cancer, motor accidents, war, and malaria.⁸

Violence against women is rooted in gender inequality. The unequal power relations between men and women are wound intimately into many daily interactions and permeate many of our social, political and cultural institutions. This is why violence against women is difficult to address, and why we need action at all levels, by people working collectively and intelligently, to bring about change.

Violence against women and girls does not just occur in developing countries: Australian women and girls experience violence too. Today, one in three Australian women has experienced physical violence, and this violence is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men. Violence against women in Australia uses up 40% of police time,⁹ is a factor in more than 50% of substantiated child protection cases,¹⁰ and is the single biggest driver of homelessness, resulting in 23% of people seeking access to Specialist Homelessness Services.¹¹

It is significantly worse for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. The Productivity Commission reported that in 2012–2013, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were more than 34 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence (perpetrated by Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners and family members) than non-Indigenous women.¹² In addition, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women represent just 2% of the Australian population, but 34% of the female population of prisons,¹³ where they have also been subject to brutality.

Leading advocates, such as Antoinette Braybrook of the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service in Victoria, have highlighted how the cycle and severity of violence is exacerbated by institutional racism from service providers and the justice system. This is combined with marginalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's voices and stories, and insufficient investment in Indigenous-led legal and support services that specialise in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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Women and girls aged 15 to 44 globally are more at risk of rape and domestic violence than of cancer, motor accidents, war, and malaria.

Lae, Papua New Guinea: Six-year-old Jane* survived a brutal assault by four men which left her hospitalised and permanently scarred. Photo: Vlad Sokhin/Oxfam

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN HAS SERIOUS SOCIAL, HEALTH, AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The social impact of violence against women is devastating.

It diminishes the ability of women and girls to gain an education, earn a living, participate in public life, and live a life free from fear, while studies conducted worldwide show that the physical and mental health of abused women and their dependents are significantly worse than non-abused women.¹⁴

Violence against women is a global public health concern.

Injuries arising from physical abuse range from facial injuries to traumatic brain injuries that have long-term or permanent effects. Studies also show that there are clear links between the experience of sexual violence within marriage and a woman's increased risk of acquiring sexually transmitted infections and HIV — evidence of forced sexual contact and women's powerlessness to negotiate use of protection.¹⁵

In addition to the acute trauma of physical and sexual violence, there are lasting psychological effects, which continue to present as health problems long after the abuse may have ceased. Sustained stress levels for women can manifest in long-term health problems such as cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal disorders, chronic pain, and the development of diabetes. Psychological stress is also common and manifests in issues such as sleeplessness, eating disorders, and post-traumatic shock disorder.¹⁶

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS RESULTS IN MEASURABLE ECONOMIC IMPACTS IN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING ECONOMIES.

- A comprehensive 2015 study revealed that the cost of violence against women in Australia is significant — an estimated AUD \$21.7 billion a year — and ever-increasing. Survivors bear the greatest burden of this cost, while the Australian national and state governments shoulder the second greatest burden — to the tune of AUD \$7.8 billion a year — in providing health services, administrative services and social welfare.¹⁷
- Violence against women and girls in the Pacific is prolific, and creates significant associated economic costs. For example, in Fiji, the cost to the country's economy is estimated to be 7% of GDP (around AUD \$190 million).¹⁸

THE PACIFIC IS A HOTSPOT FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

In many Pacific countries, women face extremely high rates of gender-based violence. In at least six Pacific countries, 60% or more of women reported physical and sexual violence by a partner or a non-partner.¹⁹

In the Solomon Islands, the statistics are horrific: nearly two of every three women aged 15 to 49 experienced violence from their current or former partner; around 18% of women had experienced non-partner violence; 37% have been sexually abused before the age of 15; and when violence was experienced, it was more likely to be severe.²⁰

In Papua New Guinea, it is difficult to obtain accurate data because there is no government mechanism to collect the data: the last comprehensive survey on intimate partner data was published over 30 years ago.²¹ However, a 2013 study conducted in Bougainville revealed that 80% of men had perpetrated physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime, and over 40% reported rape of a non-partner.²² Human Rights Watch's 2015 report *Bashed Up: Family Violence in Papua New Guinea* called family violence in PNG "an emergency" for which "far more needs to be done".²³

Oxfam and our local partners (listed on page 10) have experienced first-hand the massive demand for support for survivors as well as women under imminent threat of violence and murder, including linked to sorcery accusations. In 2014–2015, Oxfam-supported organisations provided life-saving legal and social services to 9,436 clients in PNG who had experienced gender-based violence, including sorcery-related violence.

Pacific countries require greater and more predictable support for programs that support survivors, prevent violence against women and girls, and support women and girls to achieve their full potential and enjoyment of rights.

Recent (and as yet unpublished) evaluations of Oxfam programs in PNG and the Solomon Islands indicate that sustained investment in the region is necessary to promote lasting gender equality.

Many Pacific countries are severely affected by natural disasters and climate change, which can worsen the situation for women and girls. According to the 2014 report by the UN Secretary-General on gender equality in natural disasters, violence against women and girls (including rape, trafficking, forced marriage and sexual exploitation) rises during natural disasters.²⁴ At the same time, women's access to disrupted services and justice can also greatly decline.

It is in Australia's national interest to support the development of an Asia-Pacific region that is economically stable, sustainable, and just. Promoting gender equality throughout the region is recognised as key to advancing Australia's national interests as well as a reflection of Australia's values of fairness and equality. But, as a good neighbour, we can do better in terms of investment, holistic approaches, and consistency.

The efficacy of Australia's aid will continue to be undermined by violence against women and girls unless we concentrate our aid efforts on programs that aim to eliminate gender inequality and bring about change at all levels. The programs need to be designed with, and led by, local people, and receive investment proportionate to this priority policy area.

Despite a global call to action to address the problem of violence against women and girls, many responses are piecemeal. Both in Australia and in countries we support with our aid program, governments can fall into the trap of funding or supporting just one part of the solution, rather than the whole. What is needed is a suite of interventions that collectively target legal, cultural, and social changes and put women at the centre of change. And these need to be backed up by sufficient investment.

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20 Secretariat of the Pacific Community. Solomon Islands Family Health and Support Study: A study on violence against women and children. Noumea, New Caledonia: Secretariat of the Pacific Community; 2009. See more at: www.spc.int/hdp/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=39&dir=ASC&order=name&Itemid=44&limit=5&limitstart=0

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24 UN, Gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters, Report of the Secretary-General, Commission on the Status of Women, Fifty-eighth session, March 2014.

OXFAM'S PARTNERS IN THE PACIFIC

Oxfam has worked with the following local partners: Family for change, Lifeline PNG, Madang Provincial Council of Women, Mamma Emma Crisis Centre, Nana Kundi Crisis Centre, Papua Hahine, Saint Anna Crisis Centre, Keidu Safe House, Voice for Change, Kafe Women's Safe House, Kup Women for Peace, Human Rights Defenders, Femili PNG, Family Support Centre, Vois Blong Mere Solomon Islands, Solomon Islands National Council of Women and International Women's Development Agency.

OXFAM'S APPROACH

The voices of women and local organisations where we work and significant global evidence have significantly informed how Oxfam approaches programs that address violence against women and girls. We partner with local organisations, particularly women's organisations, so that solutions are contextually appropriate and led by locals. Using this partnership approach, we:

- run creative, large-scale campaigns, and facilitate local communities to take action that will change the attitudes and behaviours that underpin violence against women and girls;
- increase access to appropriate, quality services for survivors of violence;
- work with governments and justice sectors to improve policies, laws and responsive budgets, and to make sure they are implemented and enforced;

- hold private organisations accountable for addressing violence against women and girls in their operations and workplaces; and
- support women, women's organisations, and community-led efforts for change because they are at the very forefront of progress made to eliminate violence against women and girls.

We aim to continually improve the effectiveness of our programs by using local leaders, maintaining dialogue with other key stakeholders, and learning from evidence of the effects of our programs.

Although we have achieved considerable success with this multi-faceted approach, **we and our partners, and other organisations working on this important issue, need more and better targeted support from the Australian Government if we are to bring about long-term change and eliminate violence against women and girls.**



Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands: The Cheka family has experienced a change in their family dynamics since attending gender-based training. Lydia said she has seen a reduction of violence against women. "In the past, women and children lived in great fear. We're not frightened anymore. We're happy now. We're free." Photo: Hamish Pattison/Oxfam.

OXFAM AND WOMEN IN THE PACIFIC ARE LEADING GROUND-BREAKING CHANGE

HOW WE'RE WORKING TOGETHER TO END THE APPALLING VIOLENCE

Oxfam has been actively working to eliminate violence against women throughout the Pacific region by supporting local organisations and appointing Pacific Islanders as leaders of our Pacific programs.

We support a number of significant programs in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Solomon Islands with considerable support from Australian aid through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

For example, in 2011, PNG began a program called "Ending Violence Against Women" (EVAW): in 2014–2015, Oxfam, working with our partner organisations in nine of 21 provinces in PNG, provided EVAW with support and services, reaching an estimated 53% of PNG's population. In the Solomon Islands, Oxfam supports the Safe Families Program, launched in 2015, which builds on the successes and lessons from Oxfam's Standing Together Against Violence (STAV) program, which ran from July 2009 to January 2016.

These programs focus on increasing survivors' access to effective support services and resources, increasing people's knowledge of rights and gender equality, improving and implementing legislation relating to gender-based violence, and supporting women's leadership to challenge violence against women. As such, they demonstrate that **effective work is happening on the ground and strong women are leading change in their communities.**

"Before the STAV Program most women in the community have little or no control over money. The husbands make all the decisions on how to spend the money as they are seen as good managers of money spending, but they are not. They use money to buy beer a lot and drink and come home and beat their women. But now this has changed. Many women have access to money and know how to budget and manage their family money for school fees for their children and they also earn money from selling at the markets and support their husbands so women now have access to money and women and men make mutual decision on spending of money. This is a good change and women are happy."

(Male Community Leader, Tamboko)

Importantly, both programs support women's leadership by backing local women-led organisations and convening networks that can advocate and influence policy. Oxfam in the Pacific is led by Pacific Islanders, which reflects Oxfam's commitment to ensuring that Pacific people lead and drive contextually-appropriate change. These programs included several successful features, including those listed below.

- **Support of the existing predominantly women-led organisations to improve their capacity to support the acute and on-going needs of survivors** and supporting counselling and legal services to provide more effective and efficient services for survivors of violence. This has meant that survivors of violence against women have been able to access essential crisis and support services, including safe houses, paralegal and police support, relocation to safe locations of their choosing, basic needs, and referrals to other services, such as medical support and welfare.
- **Intensive engagement at a community level over a sustained period**, that included structured community dialogue and action-planning. Many of the men who participated in the Solomon Islands Standing Together Against Violence program re-evaluated how they thought about stereotyped roles, and are now participating in a range of domestic duties; and women gained more influence in decision-making processes. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the incidence of violence in all three communities where it was implemented.
- **Financial management training**, where women learnt to manage their household funds and developed business skills, which resulted in the case of STAV in some women exerting more influence over the household income and distribution of resources. Some women report that this also resulted in fewer arguments, and other women have reported that they have used their new skills to start small businesses, earn income, and maintain control over that income. There have been promising increases of women's leadership and participation in decision-making at the community level, particularly around mining and logging and the potential negative effects these industries can have on their community.

OXFAM'S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PROGRAMS: A SNAPSHOT OF OUR IMPACT

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Increasing survivors' access to support services

- 9,436 survivors of violence given access to quality crisis (counselling, mediation, paralegal, safe shelter, relocation, and basic material needs) and referral services in 2014–2015 via the Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) program
- Greater coordination, shared learning and improved partnerships between Oxfam-supported services, and between Oxfam-supported services and other local services, justice and social welfare system and hospitals (what is called "referral pathways").

Improving legislation, improving government investment

Oxfam and its partners contributed to the following outcomes and processes.

- Two provincial Family Sexual Violence Action Committees (FSVACs) established
- Family and Sexual Violence Referral system guidelines developed
- National guidelines for running of safe houses drafted
- Counsellor Code of Ethics developed
- National Gender-Based Violence Strategy developed
- Changes made to the 2013 Family Protection Act and the 2015 Sorcery National Action Plan
- The Sorcery Act was repealed in 2013

Loosening gender roles, changing attitudes, norms and behaviours, and addressing gender inequality at the community level

- 51,692 men and boys in 2014–2015 were exposed to awareness-raising and attitude-targeted messages — many more than expected, due to male advocates — leaders, village councillors and court officials — whose participation and status encouraged local attendance via the EVAW program
- Local partners have been educating survivors and those who support them about national laws, legal processes and budgeting that relate to the seeking of justice.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

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Increasing survivors' access to support services

- 2,840 clients were provided with direct support through the Oxfam partner, the Family Support Centre's (FSC) legal and counselling services
- 5,135 beneficiaries directly benefitted from FSC's community outreach work and an estimated 27,963 people indirectly benefitted.

Improving legislation, improving government investment

- The Standing Together Against Violence program (STAV) Community Engagement Coordinator contributed to the development of the Family Protection Bill, drawing on his own experience of working with communities.
- The Government of Solomon Islands produced its first report to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, with input from Oxfam.

OXFAM'S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PROGRAMS: A SNAPSHOT OF OUR IMPACT CONTINUED

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Loosening gender roles, changing attitudes, norms and behaviours, and addressing gender inequality at the community level

- Three project communities involved in the stav program. Participants reported more equal relationships and reduced prevalence of violence against women, saying:
- There was less violence in their homes
- Men were less violent to their wives
- They were able to peacefully resolve situations that previously would have resulted in violence

Increasing people's knowledge of rights and gender equality

- They now intervene in situations of violence, using appropriate methods.
- Attitudes about violence against women are shifting
- People are less accepting of any violence, including violence against women
- A significant reduction in the number of survey respondents who agree that a husband has a good reason to hit his wife if she has been unfaithful (now 42% compared to 70% in the baseline survey)
- Men are helping more with domestic tasks, including sewing clothes, cleaning, cooking, looking after children, feeding pigs, and gardening.

The progress being made in the Pacific through Oxfam's programs is promising and inspiring. The roles that women have in these programs demonstrate that women in the Pacific are not just survivors of violence, but leaders of change.

Other Pacific countries, particularly Vanuatu and Fiji, are learning from these programs in PNG and the Solomon Islands, and are considering how to increase their focus on addressing violence against women, especially in relation to resilience, livelihoods, and women's leadership of programs.

Despite this progress, as is the trend globally, change is being achieved at varying rates, and **it will likely be generations before norms and behaviours are positively transformed.** This means that it is imperative that we continue to collect and analyse relevant data about programs to remain aware of what works and what does not work.

"We women are really strong. They see us as being very strong and they start to learn... If violence happens in the community, it is the women that push with Oxfam messages."

Woman from Tamboko



Photo: Rodney Dekker/Oxfam

HOW TO DRAMATICALLY REDUCE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE PACIFIC

Independent evaluations of Oxfam's major programs, including PNG's Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) and Solomon Islands' Standing Together Against Violence (STAV), indicate that, to effectively address violence against women in the Pacific, we need programs that:

- Shape legislation and improve the implementation of that legislation;
- Provide better access to services, provide support for women-led organisations, and increase people's knowledge of resources and rights;
- Loosen gender roles, change attitudes, norms and behaviours, and address gender inequality at the community level; and
- Increase women's influence in decision-making processes
- Take account of existing cultural frameworks, engage with communities and partners, and acknowledge the reality that change takes time.

In addition, international literature and evaluations conducted in PNG and the Solomon Islands indicate that effective programs have the following characteristics.

INVEST OVER THE LONG TERM

Long-term investment in prevention programming is essential as it takes time to change deep-rooted norms and behaviours, and strengthen respect for the rights of women and girls. Investments need to focus on changing behaviours, attitudes, formal institutions and laws. These critical long-term outcomes rely on sustained, multi-year predictable commitments and an approach to program evaluation that considers more than just outputs.

ADOPT A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Adopting a holistic approach, incorporating multiple strategies and targeting individuals and the community, is particularly effective at influencing change in social, political and economic structures.

Oxfam's Pacific programs demonstrate the importance of a multi-layered, integrated approach. Our programs have three primary streams of work:

- Improving access to services and improving the quality of those services;
- Improving the legislative and budgeting environment that enables effective prevention of violence against women and girls and support to survivors, and supports governments to take on greater responsibility; and

- Working at a community level to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, which includes working with men and boys.

This approach increased the impact of our programs because it communicated consistent messaging about gender inequality and violence against women, and drew on the experience in one area to support change in another.

We are also seeking to increase a focus on women's economic empowerment and large-scale, innovative campaigning.

Services for women experiencing violence are most effective when they are supported by a strong multi-sectoral referral system, involving medical institutions, NGOs, counselling services, social work, and legal and police assistance. This model empowers women and reduces the risk of stigma, retaliation and discrimination which often occurs after survivors seek help. For this reason, Oxfam supports the strengthening of, and effective collaboration amongst, service-providers.

SUPPORT WOMEN-LED ACTION

Supporting women's rights organisations to make changes and build strong and inclusive movements is the most effective mechanism for ensuring sustainable change in the lives of women and girls. Evidence suggests that women-led strategies increase women's presence, voice, and their role in decision-making processes at the individual, family, community, and national levels. There is strong evidence that addressing violations of women's rights and improving women's participation in the civil, political, economic, developmental, social and cultural spheres of their communities as full and equal citizens is strongly associated with changes in gender-based attitudes and practices. This is why Oxfam supports women to lead changes that will reduce the prevalence of violence against women.

ADDRESS THE ROOT CAUSES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN COMMUNITY-OWNED WAYS

Most importantly, programs addressing violence against women and girls must tackle the root causes of that violence. Oxfam's programs aim to identify the harmful social norms and gendered power relations that underpin violence against women and girls, and work with organisations and communities to change them.

Other methods of addressing violence against women and girls (e.g. through national legislation) are necessary, but not effective on their own. Pacific countries also need aid-backed programs that work with local communities and conduct en mass social campaigns to shift norms at



THE VURIA FAMILY FROM THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

"When he came home and he was drunk, our mum would wake us up to run ... for our lives ... Daddy would bash the door. Even our own vehicle, he came and smashed it. He even threw stones in our house. Inside the house — breaking the wall."

These words are from Alice, the daughter of Timothy Vuria, a chief of Binu village in the Solomon Islands. Once an angry, violent and drunk man, Timothy is now a community champion who is actively working to reduce family violence.

"That's why I'm happy," Timothy says. "Because my children now, they are happy. I'm coming home with a little bit of sugar, or chicken, bread — not beer."

In the Solomon Islands, it's estimated that three in five women have experienced some kind of intimate partner or family

violence. Oxfam's STAV Program did not just help survivors, but addressed the root causes of the problem.

Through training and workshops, communities become aware of traditional gender stereotypes and the attitudes and behaviours that lead to violence. As a result, men are drinking less and helping their wives more, which is creating happier homes and lives for couples and their children.

Oxfam also provides basic training in financial management and budgeting. Where it was common for men to spend the family money on beer, leaving little left over for basic necessities, including school fees, families are now aware of their spending habits, and are starting to budget and save money for the first time.

Photo: Hamish Pattison/Oxfam.

MAMA RASTA FROM PAPUA NEW GUINEA

"It was broad daylight when the young men came and they put a rope around my neck and dragged me, and one of them came with a bush knife ... there were men kicking me, punching me, cutting me."

Mama Rasta was attending a young man's funeral in the highlands of PNG when she was ferociously attacked. Unbeknown to her, community members believed sorcery was the cause of the man's death, and that she was the culprit. She sustained multiple injuries—including the loss of one hand—but managed to escape with her life.

Women are frequently accused of sorcery in the PNG highlands and punished with injury, exile or death. Oxfam works with local organisations to improve crisis support

services for these women, and to advocate for changes to legislation and policies, while also working with men and boys to challenge and change beliefs that perpetuate violence against women.

Mama Rasta was helped by Oxfam partner, Voice for Change. "I was not able to live with all these problems," she says. "But now with coming out and sharing, and able to get the support, I am really happy.

"With the loss of my right hand, it was really difficult. But the support from this organisation really helped me. For counselling purposes, and also, because I got the [prosthetic] hand."



Photo: Rodney Dekker/Oxfam.

ADDRESS THE ROOT CAUSES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN COMMUNITY-OWNED WAYS CONTINUED

a community level, as well as a policy level. For example, the Safe Families Program uses structured, long-term, and intensive community engagement that creates opportunities for men and women to critically reflect upon gender roles and norms. It also promotes the position and rights of women, challenges the unequal distribution between women and men of resources and duties, and seeks to eliminate power imbalances. Local communities, with Oxfam's support, create their own violence prevention plans, and community members are mutually accountable for implementing these plans.

WORK WITH MEN AND BOYS

Working with men and boys can be a highly successful strategy when it is done well, which means not in isolation, but in combination with women, girls, and communities, and focussing on changing harmful perceptions of what it means to be a man and the social norms that promote male dominance of women. Programs in which men and boys directly participate at the individual, relationship, and group level can give them knowledge and skills that enable them to have equal, respectful, and non-violent relationships.

For example, rather than just treating men as perpetrators of violence, STAV programs provided structured opportunities for them to discuss violence against women and girls, analyse problems, and find solutions. This approach achieved considerable progress in shifting men's perceptions about the use of violence and resulted in some small but promising changes to community norms, which included associating male violence with shame, women publicly talking about violence, and men expressing remorse and shame for having been violent.

Male role models can speed up achieving change.

The EVAW Program in PNG successfully gained support from many men, including male leaders. Oxfam's partners engaged men at the village level to be male advocates and to raise awareness of women's rights and violence against women and girls in their spheres of influence.

WORK WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Religious and community leaders are highly influential in Melanesian cultures and Oxfam attributes some communities' reduction of violence against women to the support of community and religious leaders. In particular, the STAV Program was successful at gaining their support, most likely due to some key strategies that included beginning each implementation with a Memorandum of Understanding with the local community, and appointing community leaders as Community Facilitators.

"The STAV (Standing Together Against Violence) programs has really helped me understand why women are important and that we should treat them equally. My heart broke when I realised that I do not help my poor wife but now we both share our roles and responsibilities and good relationship and my wife is so happy I have changed."

Male story of change,
Ngalitatae

THE GAP BETWEEN THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S STATED PRIORITIES AND ITS INVESTMENT

Although the Australian Government has steadfastly voiced its ongoing commitment to the empowerment of women and girls, and in 2014 placed gender equality at the forefront of its international aid agenda, there is a gap between the government's stated prioritisation of addressing violence against women and girls, and its actions.

AUSTRALIA'S AID BUDGET

Based on budget projections, by 2017-2018, Australian aid will be just 0.22% of Gross National Income, and therefore at its least generous level ever,²⁵ while donations to international development organisations in Australia have plateaued since 2007, rising only in line with inflation.²⁶ Furthermore, funding for the Pacific, particularly PNG, has remained relatively stable during recent budget cuts, and there are now more organisations competing for less funding.

Since coming to office, the Coalition Government has cut more than \$11.3 billion to current and future aid, and although about 50% of programs continue to have a significant focus on improving women's equality,²⁷ Australia's overall spend on this critical area has reduced. The cuts to Australian aid and a shift in focus to areas such as infrastructure investment, threaten the progress that has been made in combating violence against women: already, programs that support women are suffering as a result of these cuts.

The Australian Aid Budget Summary 2016-17 reiterates that "(g)ender equality is critical to development and stability, and will remain a central pillar of the aid program".²⁸ Investment in the central Gender Equality Fund, including two 10-year programs (Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, and the new South-East Asia economic inclusion-focused Investing in Women Initiative) has increased by 10% to AUD \$55 million. We acknowledge the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) leadership that has ensured a continued focus on gender equality, and appreciate the close partnership with DFAT in the Pacific region. However, a closer look at the overall aid investment in gender equality and reduction of violence against women shows some concerning trends.

Overall, gender equality is hit by broad cuts to aid and does not receive investment that is in proportion to its policy prioritisation.

TRACKING AUSTRALIA'S SPEND ON GENDER EQUITY AND ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

DFAT investment in gender equality is difficult to track. As our colleagues at the International Women's Development Agency have noted, "part of the problem is that DFAT is working with one hand tied behind its back in terms of tracking gender equality".²⁹ DFAT's systems can accurately reveal only where spend is given to gender equality as a principal objective, which was 5% of 2013-2014 investments.³⁰ If gender equality is instead a significant objective (but not the principal objective), DFAT can only track the total value of investments, rather than the actual value of spend on gender equality in those investments.³¹ This lack of transparency on investment in gender equality brings into question the government's commitment at a policy level.

One of the government's performance targets relating to gender equality in aid is that more than 80% of aid investments effectively address gender issues in their implementation, but, because of these difficulties in tracking investment in gender equality, it is not possible to determine if this target has been achieved. However, even by DFAT's own reckoning, this target is yet to be reached and the areas that have been earmarked for more investment through Australian aid, such as infrastructure projects led by the private sector,³² continue to perform poorly when it comes to gender equality and empowering women.³³ Moreover, while 50% of DFAT's 2013-2014 aid investments identified gender equality as a significant objective, it is impossible to know the actual spend on actions taken to address gender equality in those investments.³⁴

Of equal concern is the proportion of spend where gender equality is a principal priority, because the investment does not match the policy commitment. This is evident in the Pacific region where the spend is disproportionate to the significance of the issue: for example, only 0.025% of the total PNG aid program is spent on addressing violence against women,³⁵ and **gender-related stand-alone investments overall receive just 3% of the PNG Aid Investment Plan 2015-2016 to 2017-2018.**³⁶

INVESTMENTS IN LARGE-SCALE INFRASTRUCTURE

The shift in focus of Australian aid to larger-scale infrastructure investment threatens the progress that has been made in combating violence against women. While our experience of working with communities around the world tells us that large-scale infrastructure projects can undeniably lift people out of poverty, they can also result in displacement of marginalised groups, including women, and leave some of the poorest communities worse off. Violence comes in many forms, and these negative impacts — including loss of food sources and livelihoods, as well as increased social upheaval — frequently affect women more deeply than they affect men.

The government needs to closely examine its infrastructure investments and the potential impact on the poorest and most vulnerable women in developing countries if it is to live up to its strong rhetoric on women's equality and combating violence. This includes putting in place stronger safeguards and ensuring free, prior and informed consent is recognised and enforced to enable people affected by projects to assert their rights and influence the decision-making process.

BALANCING INVESTMENT IN PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

It is essential that Australia's aid program balances investment in prevention of violence with investment in response services.

Long-term and evidence-based holistic efforts to prevent violence from occurring need to be complemented by coordinated and quality services (including access to justice) for women who have experienced violence, and vice versa. This means aid investment needs to support programs that address the root causes of violence against women, including gender inequality (eg, changing communities' attitudes, supporting national governments to develop legislation and plans that take a holistic approach to the elimination of violence against women), and programs that provide necessary and long-lasting support to women and girls who are survivors of violence.

WHAT'S TO BE DONE?

If the Australian Government wishes to fulfil its commitment to promote gender equality across all areas of its aid program, it needs to restore the aid budget, review relevant economic infrastructure projects and policies to ensure that women are not being left out or left behind, update relevant systems and processes to achieve transparency of the actual spend on gender equality, and develop consistent policies that promote women's rights and aim to eliminate violence against women and girls.

29 Jo Crawford, 'Budget 2016-17: Gender equality focus welcome but the numbers show neither aid nor gender equality are priorities', International Women's Development Agency, iwda.org.au, 6 May 2016.

30 Performance of Australian Aid Report 2014-15, p. 61.

31 Jo Crawford, 'Budget 2016-17: Gender equality focus welcome but the numbers show neither aid nor gender equality are priorities', International Women's Development Agency, iwda.org.au, 6 May 2016.

32 Performance of Australian Aid Report 2014-15, p11.

33 Op. cit.

34 Op. cit., p.59.

25 Australian Aid Tracker: devpolicy.org/aidtracker/trends/

26 Australian Aid Tracker: devpolicy.org/aidtracker/trends/

27 Australian Government (DFAT), Performance of Australian Aid Report 2014-15, published February 2016, available at: dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/performance-of-australian-aid-2014-15.pdf

28 Australian Government (DFAT), Australian Aid Budget Summary 2016-17, Canberra, May 2016, p. 1.

35 'Budget 2016-17: Gender equality focus welcome but the numbers show neither aid nor gender equality are priorities', op. cit

36 Australian Government (DFAT), Aid Investment Plan Papua New Guinea: 2015-16 to 2016-17, 30 September 2015, dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/aid-investment-plan-aip-papua-new-guinea-2015-16-to-2017-18.aspx

A CALL FOR ACTION

“The standard you walk past is the standard you accept.”

Major David Morrison,
2016 Australian of the Year

Many women and girls in Australia and our neighbouring countries are unable to lead full lives where they contribute to and benefit from their society because of gender inequality and violence.

Despite the significant change achieved by organisations such as Oxfam and our partners that in the Pacific region, the Australian Government needs to provide continued and prioritised investment and support, to bring about long-term changes in attitudes and behaviour, and eliminate violence against women and girls.

SPECIFICALLY, THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SHOULD TAKE THE FOLLOWING SIX ACTIONS.

1. Reverse the devastating cuts to Australian aid, and restore the aid program to at least \$5.5 billion by the end of the next term of government.
2. Increase the spend on gender equality and addressing violence against women in programs where it is a principal objective, and ensure transparency of the actual gender equality spend in programs where it is a significant objective.
3. Prioritise funding initiatives in the Australian aid budget to tackle gender inequality and violence against women, holistically and on a large scale. These should include:
 - a) policy and legislative changes at community, national and international levels;
 - b) community-driven support, advocacy and awareness services that target women, men, girls, and boys;
 - c) an increase to Australian aid stand-alone spending on efforts to address violence against women and girls;
 - d) funding of locally-led services that address the immediate needs of survivors of violence; and
 - e) Provision of conflict and disaster responses that recognise and respond to women’s increased risk of violence during and after emergencies.

4. Make any increased funding of thematic areas in the aid program (including the flagship area of “infrastructure, trade facilitation and international competitiveness”) conditional on improved performance in meeting gender inclusion targets.
5. Review infrastructure investments in the aid program, to ensure that they:
 - a) include strong safeguards and standards that take into account how these projects affect women; and
 - b) allow women to have a say in project development.
6. In all engagements with countries in the Pacific region, have consistent policies and practices relating to human rights and violence against women.

With Australian Government investment, Oxfam is supporting ground-breaking efforts in the Pacific region that aim to end violence against women and girls. We will listen to Pacific voices and be led by Pacific Islander women, as well as be informed by global evidence and our international experience, so that we can effectively address violence against women and girls with holistic, long-term, and strategic programs.

As we develop and improve our efforts to end violence against women in Australia, the nation must stand united with its Pacific sisters and brothers to pursue and achieve this goal across the region. We must be willing to learn the important lessons that the Pacific can share with us so that together, we end this epidemic of violence against women and girls.

Major Morrison’s now-famous quote has never been more relevant for Australia: we know the problem, and we know how to achieve change. As a global citizen and provider of aid within the Asia-Pacific region, Australia must decide whether we will “walk past” a standard we claim not to accept, or whether we will make the right decisions and take the right action. Now is the time for the Australian Government to build on important foundations of change, and work to create a region where women and girls enjoy their human rights and live free of violence.

As a global citizen and provider of aid within the Asia-Pacific region, Australia must decide whether we will “walk past” a standard we claim not to accept, or whether we will make the right decisions and take the right action.



Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea: Matilda Koma is president of Papua Hahine, one of Oxfam’s gender justice partners. She said violence is a huge issue in her country. “But it’s seen as a minor thing.” Photo: Rodney Dekker/Oxfam.



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